

HIGHER EDUCATION: ANSWERS TO FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

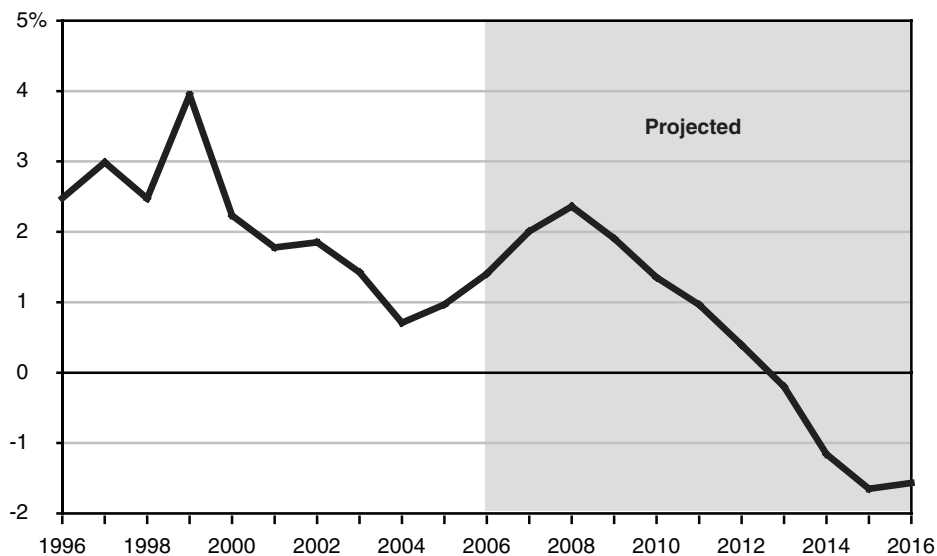
How Fast Is the College-Age Population Growing?



College-Age Population Has Been Growing; Will Soon Slow and Decline

- The children of post-World War II baby boomers constitute a demographic bulge—sometimes called “tidal wave II”—that began entering college age in the 1990s.
- As shown in the figure, annual growth in the college-age population has varied between about 1 percent and 4 percent during the past decade, averaging about 2.2 percent per year.
- Growth in the college-age population is projected to start slowing in two years, with the population actually shrinking in about seven years. Average annual growth for the next decade is projected at about one-half percent, considerably less than growth in the overall state population.
- California’s colleges and universities also enroll students older than traditional college age. The state’s population of 25- to 44-year olds is expected to remain relatively flat over the next decade, with average annual growth of about 0.4 percent.

Annual Change in Number of 18- to 24-Year Old Californians

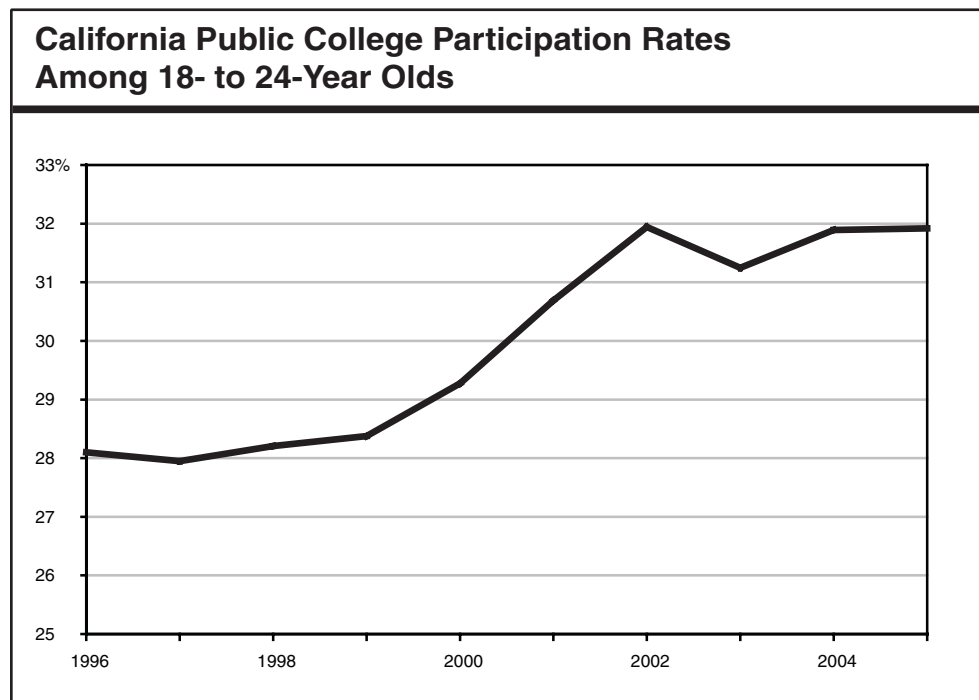


How Fast Is the College-Age Population Growing? *(Continued)*



Actual Enrollment Levels Depend on Participation Rates

- While population is a major determinant of college enrollment levels, actual enrollment depends on the participation rate among eligible students.
- College participation is influenced by a number of factors, including cost and available employment opportunities.
- As shown in the figure, college-age participation rates have increased significantly over the past decade. Declining participation among older students, however, has dampened overall enrollment growth in recent years.



This is one of a series of issue briefs examining important questions about higher education funding in California. For more information on this topic, or to request other briefs from this series, contact the Legislative Analyst's Office Higher Education section at (916) 319-8339, or visit our website at www.lao.ca.gov.